REMARKS

Claims 1, 22-26 and 28-39 are pending, with claims 1 and 26 being independent. Claims 1 and 26 have been amended to incorporate, respectively, the subject matter of claims 21 and 27, which have been cancelled. Claims 22, 28 and 29 have been amended in view of the cancellation of claims 21 and 27. No new matter has been introduced.

Initially, applicant notes that the rejection does not appear to account for the preliminary amendment that was filed with the application. This amendment cancelled claims 2-20 and added claims 21-39.

Claims 1-4, 7-14 and 16-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Goddard (U.S. Patent No. 4,297,629), and claims 5, 6 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goddard in view of Kejha (U.S. Patent No. 5,811,959). Of these claims, only claim 1 is pending.

Applicant requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1 because neither Goddard, Kejha, nor any proper combination of the two describes or suggests using a single switching device to split the batteries into at least two battery groups and to connect the battery groups in parallel to the main voltage source for charging, as recited in claim 1. While similar subject matter was recited in cancelled claim 2, which was rejected as being anticipated by Goddard, Goddard does not describe or suggest this feature, and the rejection does not indicate how Goddard is believed to do so.

Instead, Goddard discloses an automatic switching arrangement for two batteries (BT1 and BT2) that are charged in parallel and discharged in series. A diode D_1 is connected in series between the positive pole of the first battery BT1 and the negative pole of the second battery BT2 in order to allow a discharge current to flow in series through the batteries but to prevent the charging current from flowing in series (see Goddard at paragraph 2 of column 2 and claim 1). However, Goddard notes that this circuit has a drawback in that there is a voltage drop at the diode during battery supply, as the battery discharge current has to flow through the diode. Goddard teaches that the impact of this drawback may be reduced by adding additional devices. Thus, Goddard does not provide a single switching device to split the batteries into at least two

battery groups and to connect the battery groups in parallel to the main voltage source for charging, as recited in claim 1. For at least this reason, the rejection of claim 1 should be withdrawn.

Similarly to claim 1, independent claim 26 recites a single switching device that provides both a splitting circuit configured to split batteries into at least two battery groups, with the batteries of each battery group being connected in series, and a connection circuit configured to connect each of the battery groups in parallel to a main voltage source. Accordingly, claim 26 is believed to be allowable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1.

Applicants submit that all claims are in condition for allowance.

The extension fee in the amount of $130 is being paid concurrently herewith on the Electronic Filing System (EFS) by way of Deposit Account authorization. Please apply any other charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

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